Lost In The Woods

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/16830274.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Categories:	F/F, F/M, M/M
Fandoms:	Hannibal (TV), Hannibal Lecter Tetralogy - Thomas Harris, Hannibal Lecter Series - All Media Types
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Alana Bloom, Alan Bloom, Hannibal Lecter, Jack Crawford, Will Graham's Dogs, Will Graham's Father
Additional Tags:	Child Murder, Child Adoption, good parenting, Fluff, Will As Dad, Character studies, Will Is Not Well, But He Is Not Insane, Will Loves Hannibal, Child!Hannibal, Hannibal Is A Genius, Child Death
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of Starry, Starry Night
Stats:	Published: 2018-12-03 Completed: 2020-01-19 Words: 21,643 Chapters: 9/9

Lost In The Woods

by possibly_sparkling

Summary

Will Graham had a break-down and takes some time off work to travel. He is spending time with himself and his dog, trying to get away from people. When he gets lost in the woods in a strange country, he finds his ‘gift’, a neccessary evil, doesn’t only bring forth bad things.

Notes

Well, enjoy. Another of my character studies. Question, recommendations, etc. are welcome.
Not beta’d, just checked over once by myself.
Not sure where this is heading yet. The tags will update (maybe underage, etc.) and I will let you know in the notes at the beginning of each chapter if there is something you gotta heed.

Snow

Will wasn't sure how he had gotten himself into this situation. Usually he was very good at navigating but this time he had gotten lost in the woods.

It was cold and a thick blanket of snow was covering the floor and trees.

Will pulled his dog Winston closer by his leash. He was a well behaved dog and wouldn't dream of running off but they were in a strange country in woods he didn't know as well as he had thought apparently.

Will had another look at the map. The small country inn, it didn't deserve that name -really it was just a room he stayed in that some people had rented him out because they were too poor to say no to his money, he was staying in should be somewhere down the left. Only probably an hour's walk.

The locals had been very friendly although they didn't understand English and Will barely spoke their language apart from a few words he had written down from a dictionary.

That was exactly what he had wanted. He had wanted to get out, get away from his life as an FBI agent. He had had too many cases that had nearly cost him his life and sanity and he wanted to get away to somewhere where he could be alone, where no one would try to talk to him.

Will was 32 and he was already broken. He used to see a psychiatrist but he gave that up too. Dr Bloom had been a nice and kind man but he hadn't been able to understand Will.

No one was able to understand Will. He had a gift as some would call it but he liked to refer to it as curse. He hated it. He was empathic but that to a degree that was barely endurable. It provided him with the ability to look into other people's heads, to feel what they felt, to see what they saw.

The FBI had almost run his door down in order to recruite him. An agent with the ability to look into other people's heads was like finding gold at the end of the rainbow to them.

And they had used him. He had let them in order to save lifes. In the end it he had needed to make a decision and he had chosen to survive. He had chosen to leave, physically and mentally. Go to places with as little people as possible. Run.

That's how he had come to the decision he would go to Europe. He had been to Norway, Sweden and Finland, taking up residence for a few months in each country in towns with as little people as possible. He had enjoyed it so far and decided to go on.

Now he was in Lithuania, quite a poor country but with many friendly people. The small town in the middle of nowhere was the perfect place for him.
But he had barely been here for more than a week and wasn't too familiar with the place. That was why he had gotten lost now.

It wouldn't be dark for another few hours so he should be fine finding his way back.

Will studied the map again, looking into every direction before looking back at the map again.

He started walking again. This just had to be the right direction.

After about an hour he started to worry. There was still no sight of the small village.

Suddenly he saw something off in the distance.
Will started walking towards it. When he got closer it became apparent that it was a hunter's lodge.

Maybe he was lucky and these people could tell him the way into down. If they would understand his pityful Lithuanian.

Will strode purposefully towards the lodge, Winston happily jumping beside him in the snow.

The former FBI agent knocked at the door carefully.

"Sveiki?", he asked loud but unsure. "Uhm, hello? Anybody home?"

No answer came.

Will tried again but the lodge stayed silent.

If the darkness came before he found his way back into the town he would freeze to death out here in the woods.

He tried the door handle and it gave way under his hand, the door swinging open with a quiet creak.

Will carefully stepped inside.

"Sveiki? Mano vardas yra Will. Ah, uhm, I'm looking for the town? Miestas?"

No answer came.

As Will looked around he found the interior to be quite messy. No not messy. It looked like someone had broken into the lodge. Things were lying around broken and damaged, furniture was out of place and tipped over.

Now, thinking about it, it was quite chilly in here too. The only heat source appeared to be a huge fire place which wasn't lit and no wood was anywhere to be seen.

Will carefully mimiked Winston to keep quiet and stay put. He himself went on to explore. The lodge wasn't big, no upper floor, no basement.

Everything was upset, more like signs of a struggle than someone looking for something.

There was a backdoor which was slightly ajar. Will crept closer, alarmed in case someone was out there still.

When he carefully peeped throught the gap in the door he saw the blood.

Opening the door a bit wider he saw where it was coming from. A man, a woman and a (god this is why he had left the FBI just to come here and find this) young girl, four maximum five years old. She was beautiful, looking like an angel in the snow wouldn't there be the ugly red gin across her throat.

Will moved carefully to touch them for any sign of life, anything that would tell him where the killer was.

When he touched the girl's body he realised that they were frozen. Checking the bodies he gave a guess that they probably had been dead at least several days but he couldn't be sure because of the low temperatures.

Will knew that he could just walk away, alarm the authorities in the town and let them do the work. The killer could be anywhere by now. There was no reason whatsoever to use his curse.

But he knew he couldn't just walk away, not with this young girl lying in her own blood, frozen.

Will slowly went back inside the house and took a long look around.

Then he closed his eyes.

I knock at the door. I have a clear goal. I know why I am here.

The door opens and the man's face twists in anger. He screams at me to leave his property.

We have been in a fight for forever. He has betrayed me more than once. He has taken everything from me and now I will take.

Quickly I punch him into the stomach. He wasn't expecting it. He goes down to his knees, wheezing in pain.

I kick the door open. The woman is trying to hide her children, the girl and a boy about eight years, behind her back, shoving them towards the backdoor.

The man is back on his feet and tries to attack me but I'm prepared. I lash out with my knife, hitting air.

He is trying to get his weapon but I'm faster. I drive the knife into his left kidney; he falls again.
I turn towards the woman and her children again. She grabs a kitchen knife and holds it out in front of her, crying, shaking.

I slap the knife out of her hands and push her aside. I grab the little girl by her upper arm.

The boy is trying to defend his sister but I slap him hard. He falls to the floor, probably dizzy and in pain. I don't care.

I pull the girl out the backdoor.

Everyone follows me outside, the father on the floor crawling, begging for his daughter's life.

The mother holds her crying son back.

I slit the girl's throat, watching the agony on the man's face. I smile and drop the girl in the snow.
The woman pushes her son away as she is taken and I slit the woman's throat too. The man's face is a mask of pain.

As I leave the woman dead on the floor I realise the boy is gone.

The father hadn't noticed that. He is kneeling beside his daughter, hugging her close.

I pull him away from her. I watch him writhe in agony over seeing his loved ones die.

I slit his throat eventually and watch him die.

The boy is nowhere to be found as I search the house but I don't care anymore. He will die out here without much food and warmth. He is not my problem.

I came to see the man hurting, to see him die the ones he loved before I take his life. This was my goal. My deed is done.

I walk away from my design, leaving the blood soaking into the snow.

Will opens his eyes again. There was a chance the boy was still alive. He quickly moves around the house, looking into every cupboard, every place the boy might hide. If he was still here.

"Hello? I'm not going to hurt you. I want to help you."

Ridiculous Graham, he scalds himself. The boy wouldn't be able to understand.

Suddenly Winston barks. Will moves towards him. He is sniffing at a floor board, scratching it lightly.

"Winston, stop.", he commands and gently pushes the dog away.

Will checks the floor board in question and finds it loose. He carefully lifts it.

There is a crawlspace, barely big enough for a child. Said child is curled up on himself, shivering from the cold and possibly also fear.

Big amber eyes look up at him with so much fear that it almost breaks his heart.

"Hello."

Will smiles. He know the boy won't understand him but speaking in a soft voice will hopefully calm the boy.

"I'm Will and this guy here is Winston."

He scratches the dog behind his ears.

"Come, I'll make sure you'll get into town and we'll warm you up and feed you."

The boy was still looking at him before he carefully moved.

Will extended his hand to help him out but regretted it immediately. The boy flinched back, almost hurting himself in the process.

Will stood and moved a few steps back, holding his hands up.

"I'm not going to hurt you, little one. All is good."
The boy apparently decided that he was okay with that and came out of his hiding place.

His clothes were torn and dirty. He wasn't wearing proper winter attire, no jacket.

If Will had to give it a guess he'd say that the boy had tried to keep the fire going, first with wood, then with clothes from his parents and sister, his own. Until he ran out of them. And then he had started to burn his jacket, still hoping someone would find him.

Will took off his jacket, slowly coming closer.

"I'll put that around your shoulders, yes?"

The boy watched him closely but didn't move. Will took that as a yes and put his jacket around the boy who immediately snuggled into it.

"You don't happen to know how to get back into town?"

The boy blinked at him.

"Uhm... Miestas?"

The boy still only looked at him.

"Okay. We need to go and try to get back."

Will pulled out his map and looked at it, turning it in the right direction.

The boy came carefully closer, still keeping his distance, and Will tilted the map so he could see. Maybe the boy would see the map and know where to go.

Will pointed at the town.

"Here. We need to get here."

The boy took the map, turned it and handed it back to Will.

“Ah, okay. Good. Let’s try this.”

Will whistled Winston to his side and took the leash before he left the house.

The boy slowly followed.

Will wasn’t good with children, as he wasn’t good with people, so he was glad the boy reacted on his own and he didn’t need to coax him into following him, into letting him help him.

They walked for a while before Will heard the boy fall. He turned around and saw him sitting in the snow, shivering and exhausted.

Will hadn’t thought about the fact that he might not have eaten in days and scolded himself for his stupidity.

Quickly Will rushed over and kneeled beside the boy. He flinched away or tried to but he couldn’t, he was too weak.

Winston came close as Will motioned him to.

“What’s your name?”

The boy shivered and seemed barely able to keep himself upright now.

Will picked up the boy who struggled slightly but the former FBI agent didn’t give him a chance to get free. He carried him until his muscles were burning from exhaustion.

When he finally saw the first lights of the small town it had started to get dark.

They reached the place they were staying in and Will carried the boy up to his room and put him in his bed, wrapping him tightly into the blankets.

He commanded Winston to stay with the boy and he himself went downstairs again to speak to the locals.

With hand and feet he managed to explain to them what he had found and when the police came, he did it again.

They went to check on his story but no one seemed to care about the boy.

When he asked one of the people he was staying with what would happen to him or if there were any relatives, they avoided his question and just told him that there were no relatives.

Will guessed from their reactions that they didn’t like the boy’s family, Lecter, very much but he didn’t know why.

Will got some hot food for himself and the boy and carried it upstairs to his room.

The boy was still asleep, Winston watching him.
Will decided that he would wake the boy to eat something and then he could sleep some more.

Will kneeled besides the boy, stroking his shoulder.

“Hey there.”, he said softly.

The boy jerked lightly but Will held his shoulder.

“It’s okay, it’s just me.”

He smiled at the boy and helped him to sit up and walk to the small table where the food was waiting for them.

The boy saw the food and barely sat before he started spooning it into his mouth at impossible speed, barely chewing as he swallowed.

Will sat down beside him and stilled his hand.
The boy looked up at him with his cheeks full like a chipmunk. Will couldn’t help himself but smile.

“Slow down, there is more. If you eat too fast you’ll feel sick.”

The boy looked at him for a few more moments before he started eating again but slowly.

Will was a bit puzzled.

“Do you understand me?”

The boy made a movement between a shrug and a nod and the FBI agent assumed that he did understand at least a little bit.

Will was relieved.

“I’m Will.”

The boy didn’t look at him but Will knew that he was keeping a careful eye on him in the periphery of his vision.

While Will still waited for an answer he took his own food and started eating slowly in case the boy would want some more.

“Well, I was trying to find any relatives of yours but I had no luck so far. The police doesn’t really seem to care either.”, he said after a while.

The boy didn’t say anything but got up, his food finished, and crawled back into bed.

Will watched him. He had no idea about children but he felt somehow responsible for this one now. He knew that it would not leave him a peaceful moment if he wasn’t able to help

him.

Child

Chapter Notes

This is me screwing the legal system of at least two countries at the same time ;D

Will had spent his night on the small sofa with a way too thin blanket. He woke too early with a stiff neck and freezing cold.

He went into the bathroom and fiddled with the boiler in order to get some hopefully warm water.

His shower ended up being tepid but that was better than freezing water.

The boy still slept so Will brought him food to the room before he went to the small police station.

It was still dark outside like it usually was around this late morning hours in these countries in December.

The man working there assured him, by explaining with his hand and feet, that there would be a police officer coming by midday who understood English.

Will spent the following hours browsing around the tiny shops. Christmas was approaching in a few days and he wanted to get a gift for the boy even if he would never see him again after tomorrow.

At noon there was indeed a police officer here to speak with him. He had travelled all the way from Vilnius this morning.

They sat together in a small room in the police station; Officer Melis had the case file open in front of himself.

“The boy.”, he said in a strong accent. “Is called Hannibal Lecter.”

Will took a sip of the terrible instant coffee.

“His family was one of the richest in Lithuania, his father being a count. Apparently he, ah... how do you say, pissed off quite a few people with his arrogance. We have quite a few suspects but there may be many more. It will take us a while to investigate all of them.”

“What about the boy?”

“Well.” Melis looked through the alarmingly thin folder. “It appears that there are no living relatives. He will be placed under the care of the state.”

“An orphanage.”

Melis gave a sharp nod.

“I’m afraid so. Until someone adopts him.”

Will didn’t like the fact of the boy being in an orphanage. He knew that children in there had not the life they deserved although the state tried their best. At least that was true for the US. Will has no idea what was going on in Lithuania at the moment but the economy wasn’t the best. The orphanages would certainly also suffer.

“What if someone were to adopt him?”

Melis looked at Will for a long moment.

“I’m going to be honest with you, Mr Graham. Every child that we don’t need to feed is a relief. Our economy is not the best as you might have already realised. If I see that someone cares for a child, I will help them adopt it if needed be.”

Will, not a person for eye contact, held the officer’s gaze.

“I want to adopt Hannibal. Of course I’ll ask him first if he is okay with it but I would like to. I would like to take him back to the states.”
The officer looked at the file again.

“I will need to have a look at you interacting with him and ask him about his opinion but I don’t see anything speaking against it. I will testify for you if you convince me, Mr Graham.”

Will stood.

“Thank you very much. I’ll try my best.”

The officer stood as well.

“Will it be alright to get a statement from the boy today?”

“I’d rather you’d not. Give him another day or two, he’s just lost his family. I’ll come by with him when he is ready.”

Melis nodded.

“I’ll stay here until things are done. Mr Graham.”

He left the room.

☆☆☆☆

Will entered the small room he was staying in and found it empty. The food had been eaten and the bed was messy.

Winston was sitting at the bathroom door, watching it intently.

“Good boy. Is he in there?”, the American asked his dog.

Winston gave a small yelp and moved away from the door, granting Will access.

Will put the small bag into his suitcase before he went to the bathroom, knocking at the door.

“Hannibal? Are you there?”

No answer but he could now clearly hear the water running.

“I’ll come in.”

Still no answer.

Will pushed the door open.

The boy, Hannibal he corrected himself, sat in the shower, the water hitting his small body. He shivered and cried. His lips were blue.

Will rushed to him, turning off the water and let himself sink on the floor beside Hannibal. He pulled the boy into his arms not minding the water soaking into his clothes.

Will wasn’t good with words but he could hold the boy.

Suddenly Hannibal grabbed his shirt so tight that he was just on the point of tearing it and pulled him even closer.

Will embraced him tightly.

By now Hannibal was shivering so desperately that Will got up, or tried to. Hannibal clung so tightly to him that it was almost impossible for him to get to his feet.

As soon as he managed he lifted the boy into his arms and grabbed a towel, quite scratchy but it would have to do, and sat on the bed with the boy.

Will dried him off as good as possible and wrapped the duvet around the boy as tightly as possible to warm him up.

Winston jumped on the bed, cuddling up to Hannibal in Will’s arms to keep him warm. The boy fidgeted a bit until he felt the warm fur against his skin.

Hannibal fell asleep as soon as Will had wrapped him up.

Will moved to lean against the headboard of the bed so he could keep the boy in his lap.

The sun had long set when Hannibal stirred in his arms.

Will's stomach rumbled and the boy looked up at him with wide eyes.

Something inside Will started to churn at the thought that the young one could decide to stay in his country and not go with him. The thought made him sick.

He hadn't been with the boy for long but he had grown attached to him too fast.

It always had been like this with him. He grew attached too fast and then he lost the people he cared about.

Will couldn't help himself but press a light kiss to the top of Hannibal's head.

The boy's amber eyes went wide but he didn't pull away. Instead he snuggled back against Will and rested his head against the older's shoulder.

"I think I should get us some food."

Hannibal nodded but gripped him tighter.

Will laughed quietly, moving to sit up.

"I'll get us anything you want. What do you like?"

Hannibal opened his mouth to speak but not a tone came out. He looked confused and tried again but nothing happened.

Will stroked his back as the boy got increasingly more anxious. The last thing he needed was to have the boy hyperventilating.

"It's okay. You don't need to speak."

Will wrapped the duvet tighter around the boy before he got up and went to his suitcase.

He pulled out a pen and a notepad he carried around just in case. Then he handed it to Hannibal.

"Can you write?"

He nodded.

"Great. If you feel like telling me something just write it down, yeah?"

Another nod.

"So, what do you want to eat?"

☆☆☆☆

The next day Will, with Hannibal at his hand, went to see officer Melis.

The officer talked to Hannibal in Lithuanian but the boy was only able to give written, short answers. Nothing was of any value to the police.

Will had the suspicion that the boy was holding back on something but he would never push the boy into telling something he didn't want to say. Or write for that matter.

Once done, the officer looked at Will before he told Hannibal about Will's proposition from the day before. Or at least Will hoped that was what he said.

Silence filled the room as Hannibal looked at Will with his unreadable, amber coloured eyes.

Will was the one to be anxious now. The boy could decline. After all, he didn't even know him.

In case that happened Will would stay and make sure that Hannibal was treated well to wherever he went. He would make sure that no more harm came to this boy. He had seen enough horror for a whole lifetime.

Hannibal, instead of answering, climbed on Will's lap and curled up against his chest. Will knew that he was hiding his tears because he himself could hardly hold them back.

Get a grip on yourself, Graham. he told himself. After all he had now a child to take care of. He would do everything in his power to ensure that he had everything and would grow up happy.
Will was scared to hell and back about raising a child. He had no idea about human beings in general, preferring the company of dogs, but he knew that he would try.

☆☆☆☆

The paperwork took a few days with the help of officer Melis. Hannibal's temporary passport took a bit longer since they needed to get a provisional one before they could do all the paper work in the states.

Shortly before Christmas Will Graham and Hannibal Graham Lecter (Will had insited on keeping his name so the boy could decide which one he preferred when he was older) woke in a small hotel room in the Lithuanian capital city. They had a plane to catch.

Winston would travel separate from them by a special service that would deliver the dog safely back home without him being sedated in the luggage space of the plane.

Will made sure the adoption papers (in Lithuanian and English) were together with all the other documents they needed to get through the checks at the airport.

Hannibal came out of the bathroom a bit paler than he had been before.

"Are you nervous?"

Hannibal looked at him questioningly.

"The flight? Does it scare you?"

The boy gave a small, embarrassed nod.

Will had quickly found out that the boy tried to be strong, hating to admit his weaknesses but the ex FBI profiler didn't need him to be. That was why he was here. He would look after the little, proud boy and make sure he trusted him enough to do that.

Will retrieved the small bag from his suitcase and took the item out. He handed it to Hannibal.

“I wanted to give it to you for Christmas but I think now is a good time.”

Hannibal slowly reached out for the stuffed dog and stroked its fur tentatively.

Will suddenly was scared that it might be a too childish gift for the boy. After all, he had never seen him play with anything and neither had he mentioned any toys he missed.

Hannibal looked up at Will, who was holding his breath. And then a small smile spread on the boy’s face. It was thefirst time that the ex FBI agent had seen the boy smile and he decided immediately that this was something he needed to see more often.

Hannibal opened his mouth as if to say thank you but then he realised that he couldn’t speak. A frown began to form on his face.

Will knelt down beside him.

“You used to speak before, didn’t you?”

The boy thought about what he had said and then nodded slowly.

“You’ll be able to speak one day again, I’m sure of it.”

Will hugged the boy and he let him.

“We need to leave.”

Hannibal nodded. He didn’t have a lot of things, only the clothing Will had bought him in town.

Will had wanted to take the boy back to get his own clothes from his family’s former home but he had seemed so upset about the suggestion that Will decided it wasn’t worth it.

Home

Chapter Notes

This was a quite fast update but regarding the next ones I have no schedule I’m afraid.

During the whole flight Hannibal held the stuffed dog tightly against himself while looking out the window.

Will could feel the anxiety but also the excitement radiating off him without needing to look at him.

He had no idea if this was the right thing he did but he could not have let the boy grow up in an orphanage.

At least Will would be able to provide him with everything the boy needed and send him to a good school and later college.

All of that meant, of course, that Will would need to earn money again though. He had saved quite a bit working for the FBI as a profiler and field agent, their pay was actually quite good, but he would need a lot more in order to be able to give Hannibal the life he deserved.

They also would need to move. No matter how much the thought of giving up his beloved house pained Will, they would need a bigger house and preferrably one in the city so Hannibal could go to school without problems.

At the moment he had a spared room for Hannibal and could easily areange for a spare bed to be put inside there but on the long run this wouldn’t work out.

Will spend most of the flight thinking about these things and trying to metally sort out what he hadn’t dared to think about so far.

☆☆☆☆

The first few nights had been an adventure. Hannibal had had just as bad nightmares as himself.

After a few days of the boy being completely exhausted Will had decided to take him into his bed.

Hannibal would cuddle up against him and sleep soundly, almost no more nightmares. And Will had to admit that he himself was better with the young boy around.

Hannibal was now out playing with his dogs.

Since he had seen them he had started to smile again and this, in turn, made Will smile.

Now Will stood at the porch, smiling - something that had been a rare thing in the past but now became a frequent occurance - and watched Hannibal run with his dogs through the snow. They immediately had taken to him, listening to his silent commands sometimes more attentive than to Will himself.

Suddenly a car pulled up on the driveway. Will knew exactly who it was.

Alana exited the car with a big smile on her face. She ran towards him and hugged him tightly.

“Will. Why didn’t you say you were coming back? I had to find out from the neighbours that you took your dogs back.”

Will hugged her back. His eyes fell on Hannibal in the distance. He stood frozen, surrounded by dogs, watching Will and Alana.

Will immediately pushed Alana back.

“I didn’t know I was coming back and then everything went so fast.”

Will honestly had forgotten to tell her. In fact, he hadn’t told anyone so far. He had been so caught up in getting Hannibal here and him settled that this was the farthest from his mind.

Alrhough he had looked forward to seeing Alana again.

He fancied her. Straight out. But it always had been complicated between the two of them.

They had been friends for a long time now, being more or less the same age, but her father would never approve of a relationship between the two of them.

He had been Will’s therapist for a while now, until Will decided to go away. The FBI had insited that Will had a therapist since a traumatic incident showed how fragile he really was.

“I’m glad you’re back.”, she admitted, placing her hand on his shoulder.

Will smiled but still felt Hannibal’s eyes on him so he didn’t go in for another hug or even tried to kiss her.

Not that he wouldn’t like to have but now with Hannibal the situation was different.

Will would love to have a relationship with Alana because he had feelings for her. It probably wasn’t love because he had no idea how this felt, but it was deep.

She was a psychiatrist, just like her father, so he had always hoped that she would understand him and that it would be easy for them to be in a relationship.

Will had never had much luck in his relationships before. He wasn’t particularly picky if men or women, honestly he couldn’t afford to be, but none of his previous lovers had managed to

stay with him for long.

There were the nightmares for once. The long hours of work and his disappearing in the middle of the night sometimes because a killer had decided to leave him a message.

Alana, he had always hoped, would understand but he had no guarantee for that.

“Why don’t you come in?”, Will suggested and motioned to Hannibal to come back.

The boy hesitated but eventually obeyed.

Alana was still turned towards Will and hadn’t seen the boy yet.

The dogs ran to the porch before him, sniffing at Alana who greeted them with a smile in her face.

Hannibal slowly crept closer as Will picked up a towel to dry the dog’s wet feet.

“Alana, there’s someone I’d like you to meet.”

Hannibal went to Will and half hid behind him, seeking protection.

Will just put a hand on his bony shoulder, telling him silently him that Alana was nice.

Alana looked at the boy in confusion.

“Hannibal, this is Alana.”, he said addressing the boy. “Alana, this is Hannibal, my adoptive son.”

Alana’s eyes went wide as she looked the boy over.

“Your what?”

The tone of her voice made Hannibal shrink back further behind Will.

“My adoptive son from Lithuania. He’s the most perfect boy I’ve ever met.”

Will knelt down and pulled Hannibal to him, smiling.

“Will you help me dry the dogs again?”

Hannibal nodded enthusiastically and took the towel, going upon his task meticulously.

“Will.”, whispered Alana to him. “What is this?”

Will frowned.

“What do you mean?”

“Why did you do this?”

“Because he had no family left, Alana.”

She looked at the boy drying the dog’s paws.

Will knew he was listening. He had excellent ears.

“Let’s go inside.”, he said.

Will opened the door for her and looked at the boy kneeling on the floor with the dogs surrounding him.

“Come in when you’re done, yeah?”

Hannibal nodded without looking up at him.

Will and Alana took off their jackets and went into the kitchen but neither of them sat down.

“Will, this is the worst idea you ever had. You can’t just adopt a child.”

“He had no one. I helped him and I’m glad I did.”

“But this is crazy. I see that you wanted to help him but you can barely care for yourself, save a child. Christ, you aren’t even stable enough to raise a child. My father said...”

“What your father said was confidential between him and me, Alana.”

“He wanted to warn me not to get too close to you but I never obeyed him in that regard and you know that. I always liked you and I...”

She trailed off.

Silence.

“So you’re saying I can’t raise a child? What do you want me to do, give him away? Let him grow up in some orphanage without someone to properly care for him? Put him in the foster care system and let him end up in a family that beats him?”

Hannibal had chosen that moment to appear silently. His eyes were wide with fear as he turned and dashed from the room.

Will felt terrible.

“Well done.”, he hissed at Alana and it came out harsher than intended.

Will went after Hannibal, finding the boy in his bed, hugging the stuffed dog that Will gave him before the flight to America. The boy had named the dog Dante.

“Hannibal, love.”

First time he used an endearment with the boy. It seemed to work because the boy looked up at him.

Will went to him, hugging him tightly and kissing his head. Hannibal held onto him as if he was his lifeline. Which he kind of was.

“I would never do that, you know that right?”

Hannibal nodded briefly.

“I took you with me because I want to take care of you. You are everything for me now.”

The boy looked at him with big eyes.

Will stroked his cheek.

“I love you, you know that too, don’t you?”

Will kissed his head again as Hannibal nodded.

“I’ll have a chat with Alana. Do you want to come?”

The boy nodded again, hugging Dante close before letting him sit on the bed again.

Will smiled and took the boy’s hand as they went into the living room where Alana was sitting on the sofa.

“Will, I’m so sorry. I shouldn’t have said that.”

She looked a bit confused as Will sat down beside her and Hannibal did the same.

“Don’t you think we should have a talk without... well...”

“I have no secrets in front of Hannibal. Besides, you know how little boys are. He would eavesdrop anyways.”

Hannibal gave a weak smile that was a little too pleased to be genuine.

Alana frowned but apparently decided against saying something.

“I know you made your decision and I can’t ask you to revert it. But I can offer you my help.”, she proposed. “With Hannibal.”

Will looked at her for a moment.

"It would be good for him to have a mother as well as a father.", she continued. "It would give him the stability he needs. It would give him the family back he has lost. At least the impression of one."

Will saw her point, he really did, but he felt terribe at the thought of needing to share Hannibal with someone. What if the boy would start liking her better than him? What if they would start having secrets from him?

He didn't want to share the boy with anyone else. It might be selfish and he probably should consider accepting Alana's help but he didn't want to. He wanted to be everything to the boy just as he was everything to him.

Will thought about a reason to refuse her. He couldn't just tell her no without a valid reason. She, as a psychiatrist, would probably see his relationship with the boy as 'not healthy'.

On the other hand, it would mean that Alana would be around more often and that maybe finally something would happen between them.

Will wasn't sure which possibility he liked more. Having the boy to himself or having Alana in their 'family'.

The boy, *his boy*, decided to take the decision from him.

"What do you say, Hannibal? Would you like that?", Alana asked and smiled at him.

She reached out to touch him but Hannibal wouldn't have it. He climbed in Will's lap, escaping her touch as fast as he could.

Will held him close, smelling his hair, closing his eyes.

When he opened them again Alana looked hurt.

"I'm sorry Alana.", he said eventually, turning towards her again.

"He'll get used to me eventually. Children can be like this especially when..."

"Alana.", Will cut her off sharply as he felt Hannibal tense in his lap. "I'm very grateful for your offer and I will come back on it if I need help but at the moment I don't think this is a good idea."

"Will, you have no idea about children."

"Neither have you. We've been doing fine so far."

Alana seemed like she was pretty pissed off for the lack of better words but she didn't say anything.

"Alright. I think I should go now. Will, if you need me though, let me know."

She moved forward to kiss Will on the cheek.

Hannibal pulled at Will, not wanting to let him closer to the woman.

His boy seemed to be just as jealous as he was which made his heart do a little jump.

Will did want Alana but he had never known love, always blinded by the feelings of others. He couldn't be sure if he was just projecting feelings or if he was truly feeling something himself.

With Hannibal he didn't project and he knew that.
Alana left without another word, visibly hurt.

Will felt bad. He had never wanted to hurt her but he realised that the boy was more important to him than anyone else before in his life.

Will had looked at the closed door for a while when he felt Hannibal squirm in his lap.

The boy looked at him with a sad look in his eyes, scared that he had done something wrong.

Will held him close.

“Don’t worry, darling, she’s gonna come around. She’s not as important as you are at the moment.”

Hannibal smiled.

Will put on a playfully strict face.

“Are the dogs dry? Or have you been eavesdropping too hard that you couldn’t focus on doing your work?”

Will grinned as Hannibal tried to get away, knowing what was coming.

The boy yelped, made an actual sound!, as Will dragged him back in his lap and started to tickle him.

Hannibal laughed as he tried to get away and so did Will.

Nope, he had never been this happy before.

Work

Chapter Notes

Thanks for your patience.

Will went back to work a week after.

Jack, his former boss of the Behavioral Analysis Unit at the FBI, had found out, through Dr Bloom, that Will was back in the country and had called him.

Will had told him that he didn't want to go back to field work but rather only lecture now that he had a boy to take care of.

Jack had been willing to listen after the mention of a boy and asked if Will could come and see him.

Will had arranged for a qualified woman - it was very important to him that she had a degree and knew what she was doing with children - to come and look after Hannibal.

The boy hadn't been happy about it but he also hadn't complained.

It would be different when he would start going to school again but for now, Will had decided to keep him home.

He had found out that the boy was very smart and used to have a private tutor at his former home. They would teach him English, Italian and German, Maths, Philosophy amongst other subjects.

As far as Will could tell, Hannibal was far advanced for an almost nine year old so he had decided, until they were fully settled, he would keep him home and send him to school in the next semester.

Maybe the young Lithuanian would find his voice once more, otherwise Will would need to find a school that matched his needs.

Will himself was very reluctant to leave his adoptive son with someone else but he knew it needed to be that way.

☆☆☆☆

Will knocked at Jack's door and the man asked him to enter in his usual harsh voice.

When the old FBI agent saw Will, his expression lighted up a little.

“Will. Do take a seat.”

Will did as told.

“Jack.”

“It’s good to see you back.”

“I’m not back, Jack, not like that.”

“Ah.”

Jack sighed.

Will knew what was coming. He ttried to tell himself that he neede to be strong, not only for his own health but also for his boy’s sake.

“Will, we need you back. You had a long break, you were gone for months. Surely you had time to recover.”

It wasn’t about the recovery, it was the danger that he would get in too deep again, that he would suffer once more. Every new crime scene was a step closer to Will’s doom.

Will knew explaining it to Jack again was useless.

“I have a boy now, Jack. I need to work regular times and find a babysitter when I’m not there. I can’t just leave in the middle of the night.”

Jack frowned.

“Who was the boy again? Bloom said you adopted him. Why?”

Will sighed, rubbing his palms against his thighs nervously.

“I’m not discussing the boy with you, Jack. All you need to know is that I have someone to take care of now.”

“The money for consultants is much better than the salary for teachers, you’re aware of that?”

Will clenched his hands into fists.

He knew he needed every penny now. He wanted to give Hannibal the best.

Jack saw his hesitation and pressed on.

“Just this one case Will. We need your help. And after you can decide if you want to go back to teaching.”

Will knew he would needed to find a great babysitter who would be able to come in fast when he needed to leave.

Jack looked at him.

Will fidgeted in his seat. He took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes, exhausted from only minutes talking to Jack.

“I’ll make sure myself not to overload you with work but we need you.”

Will knew that this was not true. As soon as he said yes, Jack would go back to being a merciless asshole, just wanting to get on with his case, pushing Will beyond his limits.

“I’m not going back to therapy.”

Jack pressed his lips together but didn’t say amything for a while.

“Fine. But if you get worse...”

“It will not come to that. If I feel like I get worse I’ll quit.”, Will said decidedly and held Jack’s gaze for a few seconds. “I will also not drag Hannibal into all that. If I feel that he gets dragged in...”

Jack looked at him sternly.

“Alright.”

Crawford held out his hand but Will just left the office.

☆☆☆☆

Will returned home late the next day. Later than he had planned to and it was only the beginning.

Jack had immediately convinced to look at some pictures and acquainted him with the existing profile.

Will had corrected him in many things and gotten lost in the work, in the gruesome pictures of murdered, no slaughtered, people.

When he had realised the time he still had had more than an hour’s drive left to drive home.

Will felt horrible. Hannibal would be disappointed and then he would need to tell the boy that he would be going back from now on every day until the case was solved.

Thankfully there had been no crime scene for him to go to but Will knew that it was only a matter of time. And then the horror would start once more.

Will entered his house, finding his babysitter on the sofa with his dogs.

She rose and smiled at him.

“Hello Mr Graham. Did you have a good day?”

Will tried to smile but he knew that he failed miserable. Instead he petted Winston and the others who surrounded him excitedly.

“Thanks Laura. I’m sorry, I needed longer at work.

“No worries, Hannibal’s in bed already, all washed and safe.”

Will was relieved that she appeared to be as good as her refernces said she was.

“I’ll need you over for the next few weeks until further notice, will that be alright?”

She nodded.
“Sure. I’ll run it through the agency and they’ll send you a confirmation.”

“It might be short notice sometimes since my job is very complicated and flexible.”

“No problem. Just let me know, I live within twenty minutes driving distance.”

“Thanks Laura.”

She smiled.

“Hannibal’s a great boy. Very quiet but he’s got talent.”

This time Will’s smile came easily.

“Yes, he’s the only great thing in my life.”

Laura put on her jacket.

“Okay. I’ll see you tomorrow morning Mr Graham.”

“Noon will be fine.”

“Great.”

She left the house.

Will went up to Hannibal’s bedroom, adjacent to his own. He knocked carefully.

There was no answer so Will entered as quiet as possible.

Hannibal was already curled up in bed, blanket wrapped tightly around him, Dante in his arms.

Will smiled as he knelt down beside the bed and gently stroked the hair of his sleeping boy.

"I'm sorry I was late.", he whispered as not to wake him. "I promise I won't come home that late again."

Will felt the need to say it although he knew it was a lie. He had taken his old job back and he knew that it would cost him. The decision he had made he had made for Hannibal and yet he knew he would disappoint the boy more often then he had thought he ever would.

Hannibal was a smart child, maybe he would understand why he did it. Maybe. Will hoped for the best.

The man got up and pulled the blanket further up Hannibal's thin body before kissing his head.

"Good night, mylimas.", he whispered and left the room.

As soon as the door closed, Hannibal opened his watery eyes, hugging Dante closer, trying not to cry.

Lost

Chapter Notes

> Please excuse any time related mistakes. I’m changing from scripts to stories on an almost daily basis so it can be messed up sometimes although I do beta myself.
>
> This is a pretty gory chapter, including the explicitly described death of a child. Please be warned.

Will woke after only a few hours of sleep. He wasn't quite sure what had woken him but was certain it hadn't been a nightmare.

He listened closely but couldn't hear a sound. The dogs were quiet so there was no one in the house.
Suddenly his phone rang and Will jumped. He checked the caller ID. Jack Crawford.

Swearing inwardly he picked up the call.

"Yeah?"

"There is a crime scene. I need you here."

"Jack.", he hissed, sitting up. "I have no babysitter at..." He paused to look at the clock. "One AM.”

"Bring him. I need you here."

"Jack..."

But the call was already terminated.

Will didn't know what to do. He needed to go in order not to lose his job but he couldn't leave Hannibal by himself.

The phone beeped with a message from Jack, the address of the crime scene.

Will sighed and got up, getting dressed.

He didn't want Hannibal to know anything that was going on in his job. The boy was smart and knew what he was doing but Will would rather die than pull him into the same nightmares he had to relive over and over. Besides, the boy had his own nightmares that would torture him probably his whole life.

Will went to Hannibal's room, carefully taking the sleeping boy into his arms to wake him.

"Darling."

Hannibal stirred and cuddled into his embrace.

"I need to leave to go to a scene."

The boy opened his eyes and just blinked at him, not letting go.

"I can't call Laura now so I need you to come with me. You can sleep in the car and we're going to take Winston, yeah?"

Hannibal nodded but didn't move so Will went to get him some warmer clothes, pulling a jumper over his boy's head and changing his trousers.

The young Lithuanian was fully capable of dressing himself but Will didn't mind doing it for him and neither did Hannibal it seemed. He was just a pliant, sleepy boy at the moment.

Will smiled as he stuffed Hannibal into his warm jacket and put on his shoes. Only then he helped the boy to his feet.

Hannibal followed him like he was sleep walking, petting Winston as he came towards them.

Will grabbed the blanket from the sofa and led them out into his car.

Hannibal climbed into the passenger seat and Will buckled his seatbelt before putting the blanket around him.

The boy immediately curled up and closed his eyes.

Winston went into the backseat and Will drove carefully as not to wake his boy.

Will wondered what others, like his babysitter must think of him. First he had come home ridiculously late for about a week’s time now, leaving his willingly adopted boy alone and not see him the whole day (in the morning he had been still asleep and in the evening he had been already asleep) and now he was dragging the confused, tired boy with him to a crime scene in the middle of the night.

As Will got closer to his destination he could already see the flashing lights of police cars not too far off.

As the first officer approached him he flashed his badge without looking at him.

The officer frowned at the child in the passenger seat, Will could see that from the corner of his eyes, but didn’t say anything and waved him through.

Will parked as close to the cordoned off area as possible.

He got out and looked at his dog.

"Winston, you're in charge."

The dog almost nodded and lied down so he could keep a watchful eye at the still sleeping boy in the front seat.

Will closed the door carefully and went to one of the officers standing in front of the tape, making sure no one came in without permission.

"Please keep an eye at the boy in my car. If he gets out, ask him to wait for me and come get me."

"Sir, I'm afraid..."

Will would never find out the rest of the sentence as Crawford approached them.

"Will, finally. Come."

He held up the tape.

Will looked at the officer who gave a sharp nod before moving a bit closer towards Will's car.

Will followed the agent into the house and stopped when he saw the first splatters of blood.

The scene was pretty brutal but that was something Will was used to. The real horrible thing about this crime scene was that it was a mother and her child.

Will had seen the pictures of the previous crime scenes and had known that the killer was prone to kill children as well as their parents. So far they had three murders, excluding this one.

Will found it especially disturbing since he now had a child to take care of himself and knew what it would mean for him to see that child die.

And Will would now be forced to see this one die.

The FBI profiler took a deep breath. This was going to be hard but he needed to get through with it as fast as possible to get Hannibal back home before he found out anything about this gruesome happening.

Jack led him into the bedroom and ushered the forensics team out but Will couldn’t hear them anymore.

His eyes were fixed on the child that laid on the bed covered in blood.

The mother was in a chair opposite her, bound so she couldn’t move away.

Will closed his eyes and swallowed, feeling suddenly nauseous.

He could do this. He would get this over with and then he would go back to his boy and spend the day cuddling on the sofa with him and his dogs.

Will opened his eyes, his gaze distant and far away. The world began to blur. The pendulum swung. Then...

I enter the house as quietly as possible. I know that they are asleep and never lock the back door properly. Fools.

I'm certain as to where the bedrooms are and ascend the stairs quietly. A step squeaks and I freeze but no one reacts to it. I go on.

I find the bedroom of the mother but that's not what I've been looking for first.

I go on and find the girl's bedroom. I enter and press a hand to her mouth.

She struggles in her sleep but I'm much stronger than she is.

I stab her into her thigh with my knife so she can't run away. Then I release her mouth.

She screams for her mummy and I rush to the door, hiding behind it.

The mother storms in and in that moment I overwhelm her with a blow of my weapon to her head.

I tie her to the child's chair while the girl whimpers and cries.

When the mother is awake again, I start to hurt the child again.

The mother begs and it's what I want. I want her to see her child suffer and die eventually. I want her to go through hell before she will die herself.
I show mercy on the child eventually, cutting her throat.

Then I do the same to the mother, watching the life bleed out of her while holding her gaze.

I wanted to inflict the most horrible pain possible to a parent and I have succeeded. I'm happy with what I did, I'm proud of it.

This is my design.

Will snapped out of it, rushing from the room and outside.

Jack hurried after him.

"Will!"

The FBI profiler fell to his knees in the grass outside the house, heaving but his stomach was mostly empty so nothing but sour burning bile comes up. He hadn't really had time to eat much lately. Or more accurately, he had forgotten to eat.

But to his credit he had also drunk a lot less than he had before. He was careful of his boy and obviously didn't want Hannibal to find him passed out.

Jack looks away in disgust while Will tries to gain back control over his body. Slowly the heaving stopped and Will took deep breaths.

The younger man got up, wiping his mouth with the sleeve of his jacket.

“What did you see?”

Not how are you. What did you see. Will is too shaken to be angry.

“He killed... tortured the child in front of the mother. Only when it was dead he killed her. He wanted to see her pain. He wanted her to suffer while watching her child being taken from her and not being able to do anything about it.”

Jack called one of the agents moving around the area and whispered to him quietly.

Will didn’t care. He didn’t pay attention. He was still caught up in the murderer’s mind.

Who would do that? Who would hurt a child like this? Or more accurately, who would do that to a parent?

The killer clearly had a lot more hatred against the parents. The child was just a tool for him to carry out his perfect plan. The parents, they mattered.

The killer wanted to see the parents hurt before he killed them.

Will felt sick once more at the thought. Although he emphathized with the killer he could now also understand the parents. The thought that someone could do that to Hannibal... He wouldn’t mind if the killer took him but his boy, that was a different level of cruelty.

Will had to remind himself to keep breathing slow and steady and to keep his personal feelings out of this although it was hard.

Hannibal had become such a permanent part in his life that part of his mind was always focused on the boy.

The killer. Will reminded himself. *Why? Where are you now?*

Will took a look around the pitch dark area.

There was some kind of small woodland behind the house, maybe part of the property.

Why this family? What did they do to you? What is going on in your mind at the moment? You would want to see them suffer wouldn’t you? The father would likely come home and find them and you would want to see that, wouldn’t you you bastard?!

Will turned around abruptly, grabbing Crawford’s sleeve.

“What...”

“The killer. He could still be around here.”

Jack turned towards the agent once more.

“Search the area for anyone. Absolutely anyone, you understand?”

The agent nodded and rushed off.

“Why, Will?”

“Because he wants to see people suffer. He wants to see the pain in the people’s eyes. He was sure someone would find them. Who found them?”

“The husband. He’s in the police car with an officer.”

“He would have sticked around long enough to see at least him suffer. He would want to see as much pain as he could. He thrives off the pain of others.”

Jack looked more alert now.

“We need to find him. Maybe he is still in the area.”

Will nodded.

And then his face went pale.

“Hannibal.”, he whispered and set off towards his car.

The police officer he had asked to keep an eye on his boy had left his post and was nowhere in sight. His car stood lonely in the dark.

Will’s stomach churned again but he couldn’t allow himself to give in to this weakness now.

When he came to the car, he saw that the front seat was empty. But so was the backseat.

“Hannibal!”, he yelled and some officers turned towards him.

Their flashlights rotated around the area as fast as Will’s heart pounded.

Jack came towards him.

“Hannibal’s gone.”

If Winston was with him he would take care of the young boy, he was sure of that. If the dog was still alive.

Jack yelled towards the officers.

“We’re missing a child. Look for a child. His name is Hannibal!”

The officers confirmed as they started to shout his name and spread out further to look for the boy.

Will joined them after an near-by officer handed him a spare torch.

“Hannibal! Winston!”

He ran towards the back of the house, checking out the pitch black area that lead into a small wood.

“Hannibal! Winston!”

Suddenly a dog barked and Will started to run into that direction like crazy, not even bothering to light the way; flashlight forgotten in his quickly moving hand.

“Will!”, Jack shouted after him but he barely heard it.

“Winston!”

Will could hear the ‘woof’ louder now. He knew he was close.

The dog jumped at him, happy and unharmed.

“Winston, where is Hannibal, boy? Where is he?”

Winston barked once more and set off at a slower pace this time so Will could follow him.

Will felt faint and energized at the same time, adrenaline making his body tingle and his stomach jump up and down.

And then he saw his little boy walking towards him, a confused expression on his face. He stood as Will fell to his knees, sliding a short way across the grass because he hadn’t slowed down, and hugging the boy so close that the young one was barely able to breathe.

“Oh my god. Hannibal. You’re okay. You’re safe.”, he mumbled and kissed his cheek, stroking his hair.

Hannibal frowned as he looked at Will and the older male was trying to suppress his tears.

Then the relief he had suddenly felt turned into anger. It was piercing through his chest like a stab of a knife.

“Never again, do you hear me? Don’t... don’t do this again! Fuck! Hannibal! How... why?!”

He pulled the boy into his arms again and stood,holding the boy to his chest.

Hannibal obeyed silently and wrapped his arm’s around Will.

“You can’t just run away in the dark like that!”

Will walked the quiet boy back towards the crime scene and ran into Jack.

“You found him.”

Will's grip around the boy tightened unconsciously.

"Yes."

He walked past Jack towards his car.

"Will..."

"I'm leaving."

Will ignored Jack. He didn't care for whatever Jack had to say anymore. He wanted to go home and get his boy to safety, know that he was alright in his bed where he could see him. He wouldn't leave his boy's side ever again.

Will also knew that he was over reacting and that he had scared the boy who probably wasn't even sure why he had screamed at him but Will wasn't calm enough to say anything yet.

He put Hannibal into the front seat but the boy buckled himself in this time, seeming to sense Will's mood.

Winston was also very quiet. He sat in the backseat, his head on his fromt paws, trying not to look at Will.

Will was also angry at the police officer but he was not the person to go and scream at others.

He also knew that Hannibal could be pretty sneaky and would have managed to get away if he wanted to.

But why on earth would he want to go out by himself in the dark in an area he didn't know?

While driving Will's anger vanished mile by mile. He wasn't angry at the boy, not really, just because it had been such a shock, such pain. He wasn't used to that.

They arrived at home after a completely silent drive and Hannibal followed him into the house.

When he wanted to go up to his room, Will touched his arm.

"Hannibal.", he said softly. "Come let's sit."

The boy looked at him a bit lost and maybe scared but Will gave an encouraging smile, indicating that nothing would happen to the boy and he wasn't angry anymore.

They took off shoes and jackets and sat on the sofa.

Will took Hannibal and pulled him onto his lap, holding him tightly.

"I'm sorry I got loud earlier. I just... I was so afraid I'd lost you. I was so scared."

Hannibal hugged him, kissing him on the cheek.

The boy tapped his shoulder to get his attention. They both (Hannibal more and faster than Will) had managed to learn some sign language in the last few weeks so Hannibal would be able to communicate with him easier instead of writing everything down.

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to scare you.

Hannibal signed slowly so Will would be able to understand.

"I know my boy."

Will touched his cheek.

"But why did you do it?"

Winston needed to go outside. I tried to look for you but you were gone. I went to let him do his business in the woods. I shouldn't have gone there.

Will nodded.

"You shouldn't have, no but it's alright. Please just don't do that to me again. I have never felt so scared, never. I don't ever want to lose you."

Hannibal nodded and cuddled up to Will.

After a while Hannibal had fallen asleep and Will laid down on the sofa, pulling a blanket over them both and fell asleep as well.

Psychiatrist

Chapter Notes

> Apparently this is much more interesting to write than the project I should be working on. Well... Here we go.
>
> Written, as always, on the go on my phone between two jobs. Apologies for any spelling / grammar mistakes.

The next day, or better the same day, started quite early for the fact that Will had been awake for most of the night.

A knock at the door woke him from where he laid curled up with Hannibal on the sofa.

The boy was still asleep and made a whining sound, something very dog-like, when Will sat up and he slipped from his arms.

Will pulled the blanket around Hannibal, kissing his cheek, as he stood.

“Sleep, I’ll be right back.”

Winston came over and jumped onto the sofa in Will’s spot. Hannibal immediately nuzzled against him without opening his eyes.

Will smiled and went to answer the door.

Alana stood outside with her arms crossed in front of her body. Her expression was friendly but Will knew that there was something wrong.

“Morning Alana.”

“Morning? Will, it’s past noon already.”

“Had a long night.”

“So I heard.”

Will stared at her. Well, the be precise he stared at her chin.

“Let me get dressed and we’ll take the dogs for a walk.”

Will slipped back inside the house to do just that.

Alana did the same but stopped in the living room to look at the sleeping boy on the sofa.

Will came back down quickly and put on shoes and jacket. The he gestured for the dogs to follow him. All of them, except Winston who stayed on the sofa, ran outside happily.

Will let Alana out before closing the door.

They would stay in the close distance so Will could keep a look at his house, just in case. He was still somewhat shaken from what happened last night. Or this morning.

“What are you doing here, Alana?”, Will asked as they walked slowly.

“Can’t I just come to visit you?”

“You used to do that, yes, but I know that’s not it.”

Will stared ahead at his dogs. Alana was watching him, he was aware of that, but he made no move to look at her.

“I heard what happened last night.”

“He wasn’t hurt. He just meant well.”

Alana frowned in confusion.

“I meant that you took Hannibal to a crime scene.”

“What would you have had me doing? I couldn’t leave him on his own.”

“But Will you can’t take a child to a crime scene.”

Will stopped and looked at her furiously.

“Well, that is my job, that’s what I’m good at. I need to earn money to raise my child.”

His child. That sounded weird but it was true. At least on the paper Hannibal was his son. Although he did not think of him like this. It was more like they were partners that came together due to circumstances.

Will would never want to replace Hannibal’s parents and therefore he never offered the boy to call him dad. Hannibal could if he wanted to but Will wouldn’t ask him to. He had had a dad.

Besides that, Will felt more comfortable with Hannibal not calling him dad. He didn’t ever have a good relationship with his own dad and was afraid that, when under pressure, he would make the same mistakes his dad made and Hannibal would end up hating him.

No, he wanted a better life for Hannibal. Will didn’t save him only to then spend most of his time with a bottle in hand and too little money on the bank account to buy proper food. Funny though that there had always been money for alcohol.

“Hannibal is already traumatized. He might see something that freaks him out even more.”

“It’s not like I’m taking him every time.”

“But you know that it could happen again.”

Will looked away. Of course he knew that.

“So what are you saying?”

“I want to be there for the two of you. I want to help. Leave Hannibal with me for a few hours each week and he’ll get used to me. You can then just drop him off every time you got to go to a crime scene and he doesn’t have to be exposed to such things.”

It sounded inncocent and he knew that she wanted to help him. Will did appreciate it. But Will also knew that Alana was a psychiatrist just trying to get properly established and she could need every boost in her career that she could get. Making a mute, “disturbed” child talk again that would be at least a little break through. She would do experiments and write a book on him. No. Will had been there and he would never allow any shrink to study his boy, to poke around in his mind as if it was their property.

“A few hours? So you can psychoanalyze him?”

“Will, I would never do that. But he is in need of therapy.”

“Just like me?”

Alana was looking for words now.

“Will, you can’t give him the stability he needs, not by yourself. He needs someone he can talk to.”

“He can talk to me.”

Will knew that this was useless and that they were headed nowhere with this discussion. He hated to admit it bur he knew that she was right, at least partially.

Hannibal had been through a lot and although his dreams occured less frequentnow, he still had them. He would probably need years with a therapist to forget what he saw.

On the other hand Will knew how it felt to have someone psychoanalyze you when you didn’t want that. He knew how much he felt like a guinea pig every time he had been in Dr Bloom’s or one of his other therapists’s offices.

He also remembered quite vividly how much he had hated his father when he had been dragging him from one psychiatrist to the next because no one seemed to be able to find out what ‘was wrong’ with him.

“You are not a professional, Will. You can’t help him the way I could. I just want to help.”

“He is fine, Alana.”

Will whisteled and his dogs came running back.

“I have to make lunch for Hannibal. He should be awake by now.”

Will walked back towards the house, briskly now, and Alana followed with quick steps.

“Will, please try to be reasonable. He needs...”

Will stopped and looked at her right cheek.

“I know what he needs. We work well together.”

Alana looked as if she had another argument on the tip of her tongue so Will cut her off before she could voice it.

“I’m sorry, Alana, but please accept that. I’d do anything for Hannibal and I would never expose him to anything that could harm him in any way.”

“I know.”, she said softly.

“Thank you. Well...”

“Goodbye Will. Please if you need any help at all...”

She gave a small smile.

Will reciprocated it.

“I’ll call you.”

Alana nodded and went in for a hug but eventually thought better of it and went to her car.

Will stood on the porch until she had driven away, unsure of how right she had truly been.

The dogs got restless around him.

“You are hungry boys, aren’t you? Come on, let’s get some food.”

Will went into the house after the dogs and took off jacket and shoes before moving to the living room.

The blanket they had used during the night laid neatly folded on the sofa and Hannibal was nowhere in sight.

Will went to the kitchen and saw his dogs eating out of their respective bowls already.

Hannibal stood at the counter and made coffee. When Will entered the boy smiled at him.

“Thanks for putting out the food, love.”

Will went to Hannibal and kissed his cheek.

“Are you hungry too?”

The boy nodded enthusiastically. He was always hungry.

Will smiled and picked the boy up to sit him on the counter.

“Okay, what do you want for breakfast?”

Crepes. Hannibal signed. *With goat cheese and spinach.* He had spelled that out.

Will frowned at him but Hannibal beamed. He took Will’s phone from the counter, of course the boy had cracked his password, and showed him the internet page with the recipe.

“Okay. And we do have all that stuff in our fridge?”

Laura and I went shopping and I told her what to get.

“I’m not a great cook though just to warn you.”

Will had never been much for cooking. He never really had had the time and lived off ready meals prepared in the microwave, if he had not forgotten to eat at all.

We learn it together.

Hannibal had such a vibrant smile on his face that Will couldn’t deny him anything.

“Okay, show me that recipe once more.”

Hannibal opened it and Will began taking out the ingredients, which were neatly stored in the fridge. The boy had apparently sorted through his fridge and put actual food inside.

As Will began mixing the ingredients for the batter of the crepes he looked over at Hannibal still sitting beside him on the counter, watching every step.

“So I can assume that you like Laura?”

Hannibal gave a short nod without looking away from the bowl.

Will wasn’t convinced by his answer.

The profiler stooped whisking the ingredients and turned fully towards his boy.

He usually hated his empathy but in raising a child he found it quite helpful. Although the boy tried to hide his emotions from him he wasn’t good enough yet to deceive Will.

Hannibal looked at him with a frown on his face and pointed towards the bowl.

“Hannibal. What’s going on?”, asked Will.

Hannibal shook his head.

“I can feel that it’s not nothing.” The boy shrank back in himself, trying to get off the counter. Will stepped in front of him and pulled him close. “You know you can tell me everything, *mylimas*.”

Will had looked up that word shortly after they had arrived in the US. He had thought a pet name in his own language would soothe the boy. He wasn’t entirely sure his pronunciation was on pointe but the younger seemed to understand.

You’ve been away a lot. I missed you. You were never here. The boy signed slowly, looking at his knees rather than Will.

Will felt a stab of guilt in his stomach. Of course Hannibal had missed him. He hadn’t seen him the past week at all because he had been so caught up in work.

It was terrible to see his boy so sad.

“I had to work to help people. But it’s only the one case.”

Will knew that Jack would try to pressure him into another case and then another and so and so forth after this case was solved but he had to learn to say no. He would go back to teaching and work reasonable hours. By then Hannibal would go to school and he would drop him off before work and pick him up after. They would see each other every day.

“I will not take another case after this. I’m gonna go back to teaching and see you every day.”

Will kissed Hannibal’s forehead.

But you’ll go away again soon.

Will shook his head.

“I will not stay that long anymore and I will not drag you out in the middle of the night anymore.”

Maybe Alana had been right in everything she had said. Maybe all of that was too much for Hannibal who had been through so much already.

I liked coming with you.

Will couldn’t help himself but grin.

“Yeah?”

Hannibal nodded as he looked at him and smiled.

I wasn’t scared at all.

“My brave boy.”

Hannibal hugged him.

Is this killer going to come after you?

Will swallowed, gently stroking his boy's back.

"Why would you think that?"

Because you try to catch him.

"No, Hannibal, he'll not come after us. You're safe with me."

I'm not scared. I'm worried for you.

"You don't need to be. I can protect myself as well as you."

If he comes after you I'll protect you too.

Will couldn't help himself but smile.

"Okay love where were we with our pancakes?"

Hannibal opened the recipe again and Will proceeded to try his best and follow it.

Killer

Chapter Notes

> After catching up on what I actually should be doing and spending sufficient time with it, another update.

Will spent two blissfully quiet days with Hannibal until his phone rang again.

Hannibal looked up from the book he'd been reading, frowning.

Will tried to smile at him to cheer him up but he was sure that he failed miserably. A new call meant a new victim or new evidence and thus would require Will's full attention once more.

Never in his life he would have imagined that he would loathe going to work this much.

"Jack.", Will greeted his caller as he stood and walked out on the porch.

"We found out what connected the victims."

Jack's voice was gravelly so therefore it must be something terrible.

Will closed his eyes for a moment and took a deep breath.

"What is it?"

"All the children that were murdered were adopted."

Will's eyes automatically travelled through the window to his adoptive son who was looking at his book again but, Will knew, no longer reading.

The FBI consultant clenched his teeth as his gaze wandered back towards the open field around his house.

"That's the only thing how he chooses them?"

"Yes. One of them had only their mother left because their father died in an accident. The others had two parents that were killed. The other one the father wasn't home and survived but their mother died."

"Do you need me to come in?"

"It would be helpful."

"I'm on my way."

Will hung up before Jack had a chance to say his goodbyes. Not that he ever did but this time Will was faster in just terminating the call.

The profiler went back inside and took a seat beside Hannibal, pulling the boy in his lap and hugging him close.

Hannibal looked up at him, confusion written all over his face.

Will kissed the top of his head, nuzzling against him.

“I need to go to work. And I’m not sure how long I’m gonna be there.”

Hannibal, book forgotten and fallen to the floor, grabbed his shirt and held on tight as he used to do it when he was scared of his nightmares.

“I’m gonna be fine, puppy. I’m just going to the office in Quantico. We’re going to profile the killer so they can catch him faster and I got more time for you.”

Hannibal looked up at him.

Can I come?, he signed.

Will would have loved to take Hannibal but he knew that the FBI headquarter, and a crime scene, was no place for a young boy.

“It’s top secret in there, I can’t take you.”

I won’t tell anybody.

Will looked at Hannibal in astonishment as he broke out in a huge grin.

The man laughed.

“Did you just make a joke?”

Hannibal nodded enthusiastically and watched Will laugh, totally in awe.

“Sneaky little thing. But I really can’t take you. I gotta call Laura.”

Hannibal poutet. Will kissed his cheeks until the boy started to giggle and then pulled his phone out.

“I need you to be good, yeah?”

The boy rolled his eyes and Will playfully, gently slapped his bum.

“No eyerolling on me.”

Hannibal smirked but didn’t move from Will’s lap as the older made the call to the babysitter.

☆☆☆☆

Hannibal apparently decided for himself that he didn't want Will to leave. He held on to Will tightly until Laura arrived.

It broke Will's heart to leave the boy.

Will had never wanted to be a dad. He hadn't had a good relationship with his own father, his mother having left when he had been too young to remember.

His father hadn't been a good father and therefore Will had thought this would be hereditary.

Now, having a child, Will tried his very best to make sure that he was the exact opposite of his own father, trying so hard not to be like him, that he ended almost up being like him, leaving his adoptive son with a babysitter more often than not.

"Puppy, I'm very sorry I have to leave.", Will whispered into Hannibal's hair. "I'm going to come back as soon as I can, yeah?"

You're going to catch the bad guy.

It wasn't a question but Will still felt like he needed to answer.

"Yes. So he can't hurt any more people."

Hannibal seemed to think for a moment, then his eyes went towards the floor.

"What's wrong, puppy?"

Hannibal decided not to react so Will gently lifted his chin with his fingers, looking into the boy's eyes.

"You can tell me."

Hannibal looked at him for a moment before he started signing.

A bad guy killed my family. I don't want a bad guy killing you.

Will felt at loss for words. Although Hannibal had expressed his fear for him before, he had never mentioned his family. Now he mentioned them for the first time because he was afraid for him, he didn't want his new family ending up like his one had.

Will hugged the boy so tightly he was scared that he would actually squeeze him but he couldn't help himself.

"Everything's gonna be fine, I promise. This is the last case I've taken, for good."

When he heard the words come from his mouth, Will knew that they were true. He knew that Jack could yell all he wanted, knowing that his boy was scared for him every day weighted more than anything for him now.

The doorbell rang and Will got up, still having Hannibal in his arms. He opened the door and Laura smiled at them.

“Hi Mr Graham, hi Hannibal. How are you?”

“Thanks for coming by that quickly.”

Will let her into the house.

“I shouldn’t be gone for too long, only a few hours.”

“No problem, I brought a bag in case it gets late.”

Will blushed. It was embarrassing for him to know that his babysitter already expected him to be back late.

Will put Hannibal down who looked at him with puppy eyes.

Will grinned.

“That’s not working with me, I got seven dogs.”

The FBI consultant kissed his boy’s head.

“Be good, yeah? Just a few hours.”

Hannibal frowned at him and Will knew he had every right to. It had been more than a few hours the last times he had said that. This time, however, Will hoped that he would be right.

“I see you soon.”

Will left the house, closing the door firmly behind himself.

After this case, he swore to himself, he would go and check for new houses together with his boy. They would spend the day laughing and having crappy food, which Hannibal was not too fond of but could be persuaded to eat with him.

Will smiled as he got into his car.

As soon as this was over and done with, all would be good.

☆☆☆☆

As soon as Will entered the forensic lab he knew that it wouldn’t be as easy as he had thought it would be.

Beverly, a smart woman in his age, smiled at him friendly.

Will had always liked her best from all the people who he had ever worked with but he wouldn’t consider them friends.

“Hi Will.”

“Hi Bev.”

“I heard you got a boy now.”

Will smiled a little.

“Yeah.”

“How’s he?”

“Great. I’m happy with him. And I hope he is with me.”

“I’m sure he is.”

Will was saved from the slightly awkward conversation by Crawford entering the room.

“Will. Good to see you.”

Will didn’t reply.

“Did you tell him?”, he asked Beverly.

“Not yet.”

“Tell me what?”

Jack and Beverly exchanged a glance.

“I told you that all of the children have been adopted. Quite recently. They have all come from abroad.”

Will wasn’t sure if he felt like throwing up or screaming. He did neither.

“Same adoption agency I assume?”

Jack nodded.

“That’s how he found them.” Jack took as step closer. “But why, Will?”

Will shook his head.

“Probably he’s been adopted. Or he hasn’t. No one gave him the chance these children had. That’s why he is pissed.”

Beverly flipped through a report.

“The autopsy showed that none of them was intoxicated with any kind of drugs. Meaning they had to live through the full amount of pain until their body would mercifully pass out.”

That's when Will felt really disgusted.

Not that he always felt like this. With children... it was just different.

Will had his empathy his whole life and had learned to live with it. He had seen good things as well as bad ones and one could say that in the course of his work he had become used to cruelty and terror. And if he was honest with himself, which he rarely was, he found a certain... excitement in it by now.

But obviously Will tried to put that thought as far back in his mind as he could and lock it there. No one would ever find out.

This case however was different. Children were a whole different level and he didn't feel the usual excitement that accompanied chasing a killer and looking at his crime scenes.

Someone who attacked children was just a coward. Someone who tortured them in front of their parents, well… cruel was not the right word to describe him but Will wasn't sure if there was a word in any language that would be fitting.

"How does he find them?", Beverly asked.

Jack looked at Will expectantly.

Will shrugged.

"It could be anything, really. He could just choose them as he gets the names. We need to keep an eye on all of the children that have been recently adopted from this agency. Especially the foreign ones. He could target anyone of them next as far as we know."

"We already sent agents to all the families. The police is shadowing their houses. It's seven families."

Will nodded.

"He's been attacking every week, more or less. His last kill was a week ago. He could try it any day now."

"We figured the same and have everyone on high alert."

"He must work at the adoption agency. At the very least, he must have access to their data."

Beverly frowned.

"What if he hacks into their system?"

"I have IT on it. They're checking if he hacked their system but so far no results."

Will sighed.

"We can't do anything until he tries again."

Beverly's gaze turned dark.

"I just hope that we catch this bastard before he attacks another family."

Will didn't say anything but he thought the same.

When on a case, Will tried to block out any personal feelings. It was something he had had to learn a long time ago and still sometimes didn't succeed, which had let to his downfall before he left the USA.

Now, however, it was more difficult than every. He was too closely connected with the happenings. He couldn't imagine, didn't want to imagine, what it would feel like to see Hannibal die in front of his eyes, not being able to do anything about it.

Will shook his head to get out of these thoughts.

"Well, if you don't need me any longer…"

Jack's phone decided to ring in just that moment.

"Hello? Yeah… Okay. Yeah. Great."

Crawford hung up, turning to Will once more.

"IT says the data bank wasn't hacked so it must be one of the employees with access to it. The human resource department sent us the files of all their employees. You can have a look through them now."

Will nodded and followed Jack.

☆☆☆☆

Laura sat in the living room of the Graham house together with Hannibal. The boy was quiet, as always, reading a book since hours. It left her with time for herself, reading or crocheting, which she had recently started to have a "sophisticated" hobby. However, she wasn't very good at it nor liked it much. It looked more like something had chewed on it already. She sighed.

"Hannibal?"

The boy looked up.

"Are you hungry?"

He thought about it, then nodded.

"Okay, I'll make us some food."

The boy nodded again before looking back at his book.

He hadn't seemed very happy about the fact that his dad needed to go to work again. He always was a calm boy but today he was especially quiet.

"Hey, I'm sure Will will be home soon."

Hannibal looked up at her, something akin to hope in his eyes but she knew that he knew that this was not certain.

Mr Graham was a nice man, although a bit strange, but she thought that he and Hannibal were a good team. However his working hours were terrible. She understood Hannibal that he missed his dad, especially since their relationship was still new. They were still getting used to each other. And Hannibal seemed pretty happy to have the man.

Laura knew that Mr Graham had to work and he couldn't change the fact that he needed to pay the bills. She just hoped that he would make some arrangements soon that he could have better working hours.

She didn't mind to be with the boy at strange hours since she was used to that anyways from other clients. It was her job.

"He loves you. Give him a chance, I know he can do it."

Hannibal put away his book and signed, slowly.

Laura shook her head.

"Sorry sweetie, you wanna write it?"

She grabbed a pad and pen from the table and handed it over to him.

Hannibal wrote very neat for his age, almost like an adult already.

I love Will too.

Laura smiled.

"I know, hun. And I'm sure he knows."

She stood and stretched her arms.

"Okay, let's see what we can make for dinner."

Just as she was about to enter the kitchen there was a knock at the door.

Laura turned and looked at Hannibal, who frowned.

"Probably a neighbour."

She went to open the door. Hannibal looked after her, book still in his lap but closed now.

Laura opened the door to a thin, middle aged man.

“Can I help you?”

“Yes, you can.”

He moved so fast that she had no chance of reacting. A cloth was over her mouth and as it occurred to her to struggle, she was already loosing consciousness.

Hannibal saw Laura falling to the floor and was immediately alarmed. He jumped up, book falling to the floor as he tried to run for the backdoor. He was fast for his age but not fast enough to outrun a grown man.

The stranger was on him in seconds and pulled him back in the house.

Hannibal struggled and kicked and the man swore at him before pulling out another rag, pressing it over the boy’s mouth and nose.

The younger held his breath but could only hold it for so long. The moment his body willed him to take a deep breath his vision start to swim.

Hero

Chapter Notes

I haven't forgotten about you, my lovely readers.
Here's the next chapter.
Hopefully I'll have the next one up a bit faster again.
x C.

Will rubbed his eyes, his glasses in his free hand, before he looked at another file.

So far most of the employees' files had been a dead end.

It was almost ten pm. Will sighed. Again he had to disappoint Hannibal. When he would be home, it would be past midnight if not later and the boy would be fast asleep, his promise broken yet again. He was probably the worst dad ever and that only in the first few months.

Suddenly something caught Will's attention.

"Jack."

Crawford looked up from where he had been writing something on his computer.

"Look at this."

Will got up and went to him, file in hand.

The picture of the employee called Aaron Stevenson showed a lanky man, his face thin and almost grim looking. Not the perfect person to work with children.

"He's working in the accounting department. He would have access to the names of the people. Their addresses. He would know what's going on without being directly involved."

"I'll have someone do a check on his past immediately."

Jack picked up the phone to do just that.

Will was excited and nervous but he knew that today nothing would happen anymore. Even if they could get any information on the guy's past before tomorrow morning they would probably not get authorisation to go after him immediately. They would first need to check with him in person, take him in and interview him. It was a long process without any direct evidence like fingerprints or actually catching him red-handed.

Will shoved the files away from him, taking off his glasses and rubbing his eyes.

“If you don’t mind, I’m gonna get some sleep.”

And obviously check on my boy. But he didn’t say that out loud.

“I’ll let you know as soon as I get any information on him.”

Will nodded and stood. He wrapped himself in his jacket, utterly exhausted.

“I don’t doubt that.”, Will murmured and rushed out of the office, unaware of anything else Jack might have said.

•••

Will arrived at his home in Wolftrap about an hour later. He had driven a bit faster than the speed limit allowed but it had been really quiet on the streets.

The house was dark when he switched the car engine off.

Obviously Hannibal would be in bed already, most likely utterly disappointed in him that he had broken his word again.

It was a bit strange that Laura wouldn’t be awake and have any lights on but then again, he couldn’t blame her. It was terribly late, or early depending on which time of day you looked, and normal people were asleep by now.

Will went to the front door and was surprised not to hear his dogs shuffling around already.

He turned the key in the lock but it didn’t move. The door was unlocked.

Alarm bells went off in Will’s head so loudly that he could almost really hear them. The fear sounded in his ears, chirping like crickets.

Then silence.

Will tried to steady his hands and willed himself to be calm. He needed to think. He didn’t know what, or if anything, was wrong yet.

Although his instincts rarely betrayed him.

Will opened the door and entered his house. Without a proper source of light, apart from the moon, he couldn’t tell much but he could clearly see the body of an adult laying unconsciously on the floor.

Will kneeled and checked Laura’s pulse. It was weak but beating. Whoever had done this was not good at dosing and almost killed her.

The FBI profiler’s heart picked up speed. If she was almost dead, the wrong dose would have most certainly killed a child.

No, no this could not be true. The killer would want to take him alive. He would want to maybe negotiate, but most definitely see the pain in Will's eyes as he killed his adoptive son.

Will stood and switched on the lights.

The back door was ajar and Will checked there first.

His dogs lay on the grass at the back of his house, breathing but asleep. He had apparently drugged all of them, most likely with food. They were good dogs but if he had scattered the poison around the house before Laura let them out for their evening business, they would not have picked up on him since he would have been long gone. Then they would have found the food in the grass and eaten it.

Will raced up the stairs to Hannibal's room, checking if maybe the boy was there. He wasn't.

Maybe he had managed to hide himself like he had done before when his family got murdered. He was a smart boy, he could have managed.

"Hannibal!", Will cried out but no answer.

He tried again, moving through the house and eventually outside. Nothing.

Will pulled put his phone and dialled.

Jack picked up but he sounded tired.

"Will, what..."

"We need to get to him now. He's got Hannibal."

"What?"

"The killer. He kidnapped my son."

•••

After calling an ambulance for Laura and an emergency vet for his dogs, Will arrived at the address Jack had texted him, faster than he should have been able to.

A squad team was parked in safe distance.

Jack walked towards him as soon as he got out.

Will tried his best to stay calm but he was really close to losing it. This, however, would not help anybody, least of all Hannibal, so he had to stay calm. He had to focus.

"I rushed the experts to check on his past. He was adopted, several times in fact. He had no luck with his families however, they abused him until he tried to run away, fight back. Then the family would accuse him of bad behaviour and he would be sent away again. Probably did it for the money anyways. Foster care system."

“So he wants revenge on the parents that adopted children. He wants them to feel the pain just like he did and let them see, while mutilating their children, which is a methaphor of what was done to him. They almost killed him. So he’s going to take his revenge and show them what it felt like.”

Jack’s face was as stern as it had ever been.

"There is no proof, however, that it's really him."

Will closed his eyes briefly and took a deep breath.

"It's him. I know it."

Jack stared at him before he looked towards the house.

“I had the team check out the house. It looks like there is someone inside but we can’t say for sure if it’s our man. The curtains are drawn but the light is on and there was a shadow visible.”

“We need to find Hannibal first. He might try to kill him.”

“Our snipers are fast. There’s nothing else we can do.”

Will looked at the far off house in the dark, his expression grim.

“There is. I’ll go talk to him.”

“Will, this is not a good idea.”

Will shook his head.

“No, but it’s the best we got. I need to make sure Hannibal is safe.”

“Do you remember what happened the last time we let you try that?”

Will glared at him. Well, at his chin.

“Yes, I’m well aware. I was locked up in a mental hospital Jack, it’s not like I’ll ever forget this. But this is different. It’s my son. I have to do this. I have to.”

Or die trying. But he left that unsaid.

Jack nodded once.

“You’ll be wired and we’ll cover you. But as soon as we hear something...”

“I know.”, Will interrupted him quickly. “This is what he wants though. He wouldn’t just kill Hannibal without being able to savour my pain. If we sent someone else, he might overreact and just slit his throat.”

Jack grimly watched as Will was wired beneath his shirt.

“He’s probably going to know that you are wired.”, Jack stated.

Will nodded.

“But he won’t care. He thinks himself smarter and the more audience he has the better for him. The more people he hurts, emotionally, the more he’ll enjoy it.”

Will looked at the house in the distance.

Jack followed his gaze.

“We can be with you in the matter of about thirty seconds. I’ll send someone directly after you so they can hide more close up.”

Will just waved him off. He was far, far away in his thoughts. He needed to concentrate and not let his fear take over. He needed to keep a calm head in order to help Hannibal.

Will started to move towards the house in steady but sure steps. He knew he only had one chance.

His gun was a reassuring weight at his hip but he knew that he would probably not risk drawing it and setting the killer off.

Will approached the house and it got bigger and bigger the closer he got. It was intimitating, his memories trying to pull him back into his past.

The last time had been just like this. Will had approached the house to speak to, what he believed to be, a suspect. What he didn’t know was that the suspect really was the killer. He had been right all along but Jack wanted to confirm it, wanted to make sure.

As Will had knocked at the door, he had heard a woman and a girl scream. Immediately he had barged through the door, gun lifted, but he hadn’t been prepared for the ciew that lay ahead of him.
The woman had been lying on the floor, her throat slit, blood everywhere. Most likely she was already dead.

The man, the suspect, had been holding a knife to the girl’s throat.

Will should have short right then, reacted quickly, but he had gotten lost in the girl’s eyes which were so full of fear, begging him to save her.

Then her father had slit her throat. A deep gush that sprayed aterial blood all over the floor in front of them, almost reaching Will.

This had ripped Will out of his thoughts and he had fired his shots. He had shot the guy until he had no more bullets left in his magazine.

Will had fallen to the floor, trying to save the girl but it had been far too late. The cut had been too deep.

So Will had kneeled in the sea of blood, staring at the dead girl.

After that, no pshychiatrist had wanted to give him an all clear again. Not because of the shooting but because Will had started to hallucinate. He had started to isolate himself further and further, stopped eating, taken to drink an awful lot.

It all went so far that he eventually had been put into a mental hospital. They had diagnosed him with the beginnings of encephalitis and depression.

The thought that it actually had been Jack's fault that he ended up in a mental hospital had been on Will's mind more than a few times and yet, he had never breached the subject with the man and neither had the other.

Maybe it had been for the better, otherwise his encephalitis might have killed him. Would have killed him. There was a time when he would have preferred that alternative, especially after all those sessions with the psychiatrist at the hospital, however, now he was glad that he was alive.

After Will had been released, he had sworn himself to never go back in there again. Although he had been helped, he had had psychiatrists poking in his brain on a daily basis, almost like in his childhood.

Will shook himself out of his thoughts. He needed a clear head if he wanted to get Hannibal out of there. Alive. There simply was no other option.

The FBI special agent stepped in front of the door, lifting his hand to knock, when it swung open.

The lanky, white faced man from the picture looked straight at him.

He had been waiting for him.

Aaron Stevenson stepped back to let Will into the house. They did not speak but they didn't need to. They both knew why he was here.

Will stepped across the threshold into the house, scanning his surroundings carefully. He didn't expect the man to try and kill him, not straight away, not without having hurt him first. Psychologically, not physically.

Once this all was over, he would take Hannibal away and make sure they never saw Jack or any of the others again. Maybe move to Europe with him and never ever return to the US.

Will waited for Stevenson to close the door before he fixed his gaze on the man, catching his eyes.
There it was.

In a matter of seconds the feelings hit Will as clear as if they were his own.

I am kneeling on the hard, wooden floor, my knees are aching, my cheeks stained with tears. I am not sobbing, I am not allowed to sob. If I sob, I know, it will get worse. It always did.

This is my fifth foster family, no one really cares to have me for long. I am an outcast, only a child and yet hated by everyone for something I'm not even aware I did.

The man standing in front of me is much taller and stronger. He holds a whip in his hand. A bullwhip. I wasn't aware they existed until he explained to me that he will use it on me if I don't obey. I did nothing wrong apart from eating an apple that has fallen from the tree. I shouldn't have done that. I know that now.

The man orders me to take off my shirt and I scramble to do exactly that, as fast as possible.

My young body is full of scars.

I shouldn't be afraid anymore but I am. I am terrified of this man and his whip.

He has given me a light slap before, just a touch really, and it had hurt. No one has hurt me this badly before. No cigarette pressed into my skin has ever hurt that much. No fist beating me bruised and bloody.

This man is worse, I know it, and I can't do anything about it.

He lifts the whip.

I shiver. I try to hold the tears back, try to still my body.

He lifts it higher.

I whimper and my hands come up, out of instinct, trying to protect my face.

The whip comes down, hits the floor beside me, hard.

The whooshing sound it makes when it rushes through the air, the slap on the hard floor.

I am so afraid, I only realise the wet stain spreading from my trousers when it's too late and the man sees the puddle I'm kneeling in.

He looks at me, I can feel it, but I can't lift my eyes to meet his.

"You are disgusting. What's wrong with you? Pissing my floor?"

The whip goes up again and this time it comes back down on my back.

I remember pain. The rest is hazy.

When the man finally stops, or at least I think he stops because I feel him pulling my pants and underwear down, I can still feel the burn of the whip. There is blood, there has to be because it's all wet.

I feel light headed.

The man manoeuvres my body as he likes and I am too weak, exhausted to even bother struggling.

I hear his grunts.

Then merciful darkness surrounds me and I can't feel anything anymore.

Will processed the information and, as soon as he had seen it, locked it behind a door.

The images had made him feel sick, there was no doubt about that, but he had to get his boy back.

He was empathizing with a killer, he mustn't forget that. Despite all the pain the man had been through, despite what Will had seen, Stevenson had decided to go and kill innocent children of families that actually treated them well just because he didn't have that privilege in his youth.

Stevenson had not realised what Will had seen; he believed himself still at an advantage because he had Hannibal. But Will was now prepared too.

"Where is he?"

Stevenson had the guts to give him a smile.

"First, I think, you should leave your gun here on the floor."

His voice was slightly accented. Of course. The children had all been from other countries.

Will slowly pulled the gun from its holster and laid it down, carefully not to unsettle the man in front of him. Although Will was sure that he was mostly stable and not nervous, he didn't want to take the risk of him suddenly freaking out and doing something harsh.

Stevenson nodded once Will was standing again and led him into the next room. A living room.

The furniture looked way more used to pass as second hand, a few springs on the couch already coming through.

It was dusty in the room; so dusty that it could be seen in the air around the electrical, naked bulb, which hung from the cracked ceiling.

Will observed the surroundings, checking for hidden traps, anything dangerous, maybe an accomplice. Only when he found no signs of either he narrowed his focus down on the boy, his boy, who sat, bound and gagged, on, what appeared to be, a kitchen chair.

Hannibal was a very brave boy, Will knew that, he had to be after what he had seen, but now the fear was visible in his eyes. As soon as he saw Will, he started to struggle a bit, a normal child's reaction, looking for comfort with the person they were closest with.

Stevenson moved behind Hannibal, putting his hands on the boy's shoulders.

"Na, na. Be a good boy now."

Will didn't move. He knew what to do. He hoped the FBI listening would not condemn him for it.

Stevenson grinned up at Will.

"Any last words for your boy?"

Will shook his head slowly.

"No."

Stevenson was momentarily taken aback.

Will concentrated and focused on his empathy, closed all the doors in his mind, let his face go blank, until only coldness remained. He focused on the mindset of the last sociopath he had been hunting, focused on his emotions or, more accurately, the lack thereof.

"Well, then..."

The knife in Stevenson's hand flashed in the yellowish light of the single bulb.

Will showed no reaction.

"What do you think, where shall I cut first?"

Will shrugged his shoulders.

"A knife? A bit boring, isn't it?"

Stevenson froze, watching Will carefully.

"Oh come on, you pretend to be so smart but you don't see that this boy had been nothing but a liability since I got him?"

Will focussed on Stevenson's eyes and pretended not to have seen Hannibal flinch.

"He never listens, he runs out in the dark, embarrasses me in front of the whole FBI team. I don't care how you kill him."

Stevenson was still processing his words, so Will went on.

"I would have suggested something else, though. Something a bit more painful. A bullwhip maybe.", Will said casually.

This hit the right spot. Stevenson's hands clenched but he let go of Hannibal.

The knife was still in his dominant hand.

"A... whip?"

"Yes, a bullwhip though. It'll leave the skin nicely torn open."

Stevenson's face contorted in anger.

"Do you know how much that hurts, asshole?"

Will met his challenging gaze.

"Yes. Worse than anything else I can imagine. But the only way to make children like him obey, I suppose."

Hannibal shivered and Will wasn't sure how much his boy understood of what was going on. The young one was terrified, the FBI profiler knew that, so his normal way of thinking would be influenced.

Suddenly Stevenson grabbed Hannibal and held him to his chest with one arm, as he put the knife to the boy's throat.

Hannibal's eyes widened in shock as he lost control over his bladder.

Will hadn't planned on that, it broke his heart to see his boy so terrified, but it gave him an unexpected option.

His eyes went to the boy's chin, avoiding any sort of eye contact, as he frowned.

"You are so disgusting. What's wrong with you? How dare you piss your pants? You ungrateful, little..."

Will was glad that he didn't get to finish his sentence.

Stevenson pushed Hannibal from him as hard as he could, the boy hitting the floor on his hands and knees, as he attacked Will.

The FBI took that as their cue to burst through the door.

Will managed to get hold of the hand with the knife as he wrestled Stevenson to the ground, pinning him.

The team pointed guns at him, immediately cuffing Stevenson as Will got off him but the profiler didn't care.

He rushed to Hannibal, kneeling and pulling the boy from the floor and in his lap, checking him over frantically, pulling the gag from his mouth.

"Love, mylimas, are you hurt? Did he do anything to you?"

Hannibal shook his head in time with the tremors that still ran through his body.

"I... I'm so sorry, Hannibal."

Will kissed the boy's cheek, his head, holding him close.

"Will?", Hannibal whispered.

Will was trying to hold in the tears that threatened to spill from his eyes. All the doors in his head, the ones he had locked so carefully, burst open and it hit him, all at once.

Only then he realised what just had happened.

Will's eyes met Hannibal's.

"Hannibal, are you... you spoke."

Hannibal seemed confused for a moment; he too, apparently, hadn't realised that he had been doing it. He tried again.

"Will?"

His voice was rough from the disuse and his accent thick, but it sounded more beautiful than anything he had ever heard, he was sure of that.

"Yes, my boy?"

"Can you undo my bonds?"

Will exhaled a relieved sigh and moved his shaking hands, he hadn't even realised he was shaking, to undo the bonds on Hannibal's hands and feet.

"I want to go home."

Will swallowed and looked at Hannibal.

"I want to go home with you."

The profiler kissed Hannibal's head.

"Yes, yes we will go home. And then we'll decide what next."

Will stood and lifted Hannibal in his arms. The boy was still so slight that it was no hardship for Will to carry him.

Jack appeared at their side, looking Hannibal over.

"The ambulance is waiting outside, if you need them."

"Thanks."

Will moved to the door but stopped there, turning around.

"Oh, and Jack? I quit."

There was no room for discussion in his voice and even if Jack would have tried to say something, Will was already out of the house and with the paramedics. They checked Hannibal over but apart from the scratch marks the rope had left, he was okay.

His psychological state was a different story.

Will worried about him, deeply. Now he would need to go to therapy, there was no way in hell that Alana would let him keep the boy from it again.

•••

Will led Hannibal to his car and opened the front door for him, before he got a blanket from the back seat.

The boy looked at him, probably still traumatized from what had just occurred, so Will knelt down in front of him, keeping him hidden between car, open door and himself.

"I'm just going to take off your wet pants, is that okay? Or would you..."

Hannibal shook his head before Will had a chance to finish the sentence.

"I'm sorry about this.", he whispered, refusing to look down at the stain on his trousers.

Will gave him a small smile and pulled him close.

"Don't be. You did so well in there, you are such a strong boy. I love you, very much."

Hannibal's eyes met his and he nodded tensely.

Will never had had to dress (or for that matter undress) another human being (not counting the few sexual encounters he'd had in his life) with such care. He guessed it was a bit like undressing a puppet, only that the boy in front of him was alive.

Nonetheless Will managed to take off Hannibal's wet clothes and wrap him carefully into the blanket before helping him sit down.

Will closed the door and moved to the other side to get into the driver's seat.

Once the door was closed, the silence between the two stretched.

The profiler wasn't sure how to apologise. How could Hannibal still want to stay with him after everything that had happened? After all his mistakes? And now this.

Will had to admit that it would probably be for the better if Hannibal would leave him, for his own safety. Clearly he could not provide for everything the boy needed.

"You saved me.", Hannibal said in astonishment, his voice still very quiet. "For the second time."

Will exhaled shakily.

"Hannibal, it was because of me that you were in this situation."

Hannibal moved to look at him, grabbing his arm.

"But you saved me. I can speak again."

The profiler held his breath for a beat.

"Please don't sent me away.", an even more quiet whisper.

By now Will was sure that Hannibal was able to read his thoughts at least partially.

Will shook his head.

“I’d never. I couldn’t.”

He took Hannibal’s hand in his and squeezed it.

Uncle

Chapter Notes

Dear Readers.
Please excuse the brevity of this chapter. It's more of an epilogue / prologue, depending on which side of the story you're looking at.
It is NOT the ending, so don't worry about it, but I needed something to smoothly pass it over to where the fic is heading. The characters were both not ready for what I have in mind for them, so I had to do something I did not like myself. After that, though, they will be stronger and exactly where I need them to be (Is that a maybe to underage?? Possibly, yes ;) - Please let me know if this is something you would be interested in in the comments, because I have currently two ways in mind for them that they could possibly head. If you'd rather not read them being together that way, I won't write it. Also, if I do write it, please bear in mind that Hannibal is only a character not a real person, and his brain is far more advanced and adult as any "normal" child's could ever be. Any underage will be consensual, but bear in mind, that something like this will only ever be consensual between two characters, never in real life.)
So please bear with me and stay tuned.
I will read you as soon as I can.
x C.

The next weeks were quiet, Will going back to teaching.

Exams were soon approaching, so spend his lectures answering questions about possible things that may come up.

On the day of the exams, Will took Hannibal to work.

The boy had brought a book but now he was watching the students scribble on their exam pages, helping Will look out for anyone who might be trying to cheat.

Will’s gaze turned to Hannibal. Lately he couldn’t believe his luck.

Hannibal had chosen a school that he liked, in Baltimore, which was an alright distance for Will to go to work in Quantico.

Also, Will had made plans to move and looked at a few properties in the Baltimore area, affordable but still decently sized for the both of them. He had made arrangements to view them the first week of the summer holidays.

Hannibal realised that Will was looking at him and met his gaze. The boy smiled brightly at his legal guardian.

Will had sent him to a mandatory session with a psychiatrist, who had established that he, despite what he had been through, was in a healthy state of mind.

The teacher had told the psychiatrist about Hannibal's recurring nightmares but he had said that if they wouldn't become more frequent, he wouldn't need any medication.

Will had been more than relieved to hear that. He wouldn't have wanted for his boy to be medicated at this young age already.

The bell rang and Will waited patiently for his students to hand in the filled in papers.

He put the exams in his bag while Hannibal stood, holding his book in one hand, the other outstretched for Will to take.

Will knew he could trust Hannibal enough not to stray from his side, but the boy had decided that he enjoyed Will's hand when out and Will, as always, couldn't deny anything to his boy.

Will slung his bag over his shoulder and took Hannibal's hand.

Just then the door to his classroom opened and Jack Crawford entered, Alana following him.

Will's hand tightened its grip on Hannibal's.

"We were just about to leave. I've got office hours tomorrow."

Jack ignored him, as did Alana.

"Will, we have to talk.", she started.

"There is a case.", Jack almost interrupted her. "And I need you back in the field."

Will clenched his jaw, composing himself.

"I'm a teacher, Jack, and nothing else. I've got a child to take care of."

"About that.", Alana started once more, throwing an angry gaze at Jack.

Will didn't like the look on Alana's face. She pitied him. Whatever she was going to say, he wouldn't like it.

Hannibal seemed to have felt it to for he squeezed himself tightly to his side.

"Will, if you'd rather have Hannibal wait outside.", she suggested but it wasn't a suggestion.

Will looked at his boy, whose eyes narrowed.

"If it's regarding him, I'd rather have him hear it too."

Alana sighed but didn't say anything about it, this time.

“We got word from Hannibal’s uncle. He’d like to take custody of the boy back. His father’s brother, who just found out about Hannibal’s family a few months ago. He looked for the boy until now.”

“He... he can’t do that.”

Will felt like someone had thrown a bucket of cold water into his face. This wasn’t happening. No.

“He can.”, Alana continued. “Since he wasn’t informed about the adoption, he is technically entitled to take over custody as he sees fit as the next living relative.”

Hannibal squeezed his hand tightly.

“I want to stay with Will.”

Alana frowned, but Jack didn’t let her speak.

“I need you on the case, Will. It’s urgent. If the boy is safe with his relative...”

“I might have to let Hannibal go with his uncle but I will not return to work. I’m retired from the field, for good.”

Will pulled Hannibal with him as he left the classroom.

Will sat in his living room, petting Buster, who had joined him on the sofa.

Hannibal was in his room. He had locked himself in almost since they had arrived hime. They hadn’t talked about the news Alana had brought them anymore.

He wasn’t sure what to tell the boy either, for that matter. There was nothing he could say or do to make their situation any better. He had only adopted Hannibal under the circumstances that he had no living relatives left, which was apparently not the case anymore. With this information, Will had no legal rights whatsoever to fight Hannibal’s uncle for the custody. And Hannibal had no say at all, which wasn’t fair, but he couldn’t change the law.

Will’s phone rang, and he reluctantly picked up.

“Yes?” He hadn’t bothered to check the number on the display.

“Is this Mr William Graham?”, a male voice asked. The accent was clearly European. Will swallowed. That would be Hannibal’s uncle then.

“Yes.”, he answered shortly.

“Wonderful. I just wanted to let you know, that my wife and I will be in the US in two days’ time to meet Hannibal. We would also like to meet with you.”

“You’re going to take him in two days?”, Will asked hoarsely, fighting the rising nausea in his stomach.

Hannibal’s uncle gave a short laugh.

“Not yet. We have legal things to sort out. And it wouldn’t do to rip the boy out of his usual surroundings without even giving him a chance to get to know us. But we will eventually take him back to Paris, yes. He will have the best education in the country, and he will be excellently taken care of, don’t you worry Mr Graham.”

Will was speechless. He was worried about the people Hannibal was going to live with, especially after what he had been through, but most of all, he didn’t want Hannibal to leave. He was selfish, he knew, because it sounded like they had lots of money and could give him the best of the best, but he didn’t want to loose his boy.

“We will see you two days’ time, Mr Graham.”

Hannibal’s uncle waited a few seconds before he hung up but Will didn’t bother with saying goodbye. He chucked his phone on the sofa, burying his face in his hands.

“Will?”, came a quiet voice.

Will shot upright, looking at Hannibal’s worried face.

“Hey there.”

Will motioned for Hannibal to come to him and the boy obeyed, sitting down beside him.

“When do I need to leave?”

Will took a deep breath.

“Your uncle and aunt will be here in two days. They want to get to know you before they take you with them to Paris.”

Will forced himself to smile.

“Paris, Hannibal. They already promised me to put you into the best school available, so you can be anything you want later on in life. You will have everything you wish for.”

Hannibal wasn’t fooled by Will’s forced happy expression, he knew that, and yet he couldn’t help himself but try to be strong for the boy’s sake.

“But I want you. I don’t want the best school. I want to stay here.”

Will took a deep breath.

“Hannibal, that won’t be possible. The law won’t allow me to keep you, no matter what I say.”

“But I love you.” Hannibal looked at him with puppy eyes and Will had to fight back tears now.

“I love you too.”, he whispered and pulled the boy into his lap, hugging him tightly. “We will make the best of the next two days. I won’t go to work, we can do whatever you like."

“Okay.”, Hannibal whispered, and Will could hear that he, too, was crying now.

Two days were over way too soon. Hannibal had taken to sleep in Will’s bed during their last few nights together, unwilling to be parted for Will for more than the use of the bathroom.

Hannibal’s uncle and aunt arrived, true to their word, exactly two days after the call.

For Will, everything felt like a dream from then on.

They both were nice enough and Will could see Hannibal having a good life with them. He used his gift to analyse them closely, but he couldn’t find anything speaking against them, to his dismay.

Hannibal was strangely cooperative. After only three days, he agreed to go back with them to Paris, at Will’s urging.

Will kept telling himself that it was for the best, that Hannibal would be happy there. That he would be able to forget about Hannibal and live his life as he had done before.

Hannibal parted from him with tears in his eyes and Will promised him to visit.

Hannibal’s uncle and aunt were alright with that, even offering Will a place to stay when he came to visit. He appreciated the kindness, but he knew that he would, most likely, never come. It would be too painful to have to leave Hannibal behind once more. But the boy didn’t have to know that, not yet. He would find out soon enough. Will hated himself for that, but he couldn’t change the truth of the words.

It would be easier for Hannibal to move on. The boy had been through so much, he would survive this as well. He would be able to move on without as so much as a thought about Will in a few months’ time.

And Will, well, Will would go on living. Breathing. He had his dogs after all.

About a week after Hannibal had gone, Will was in a very bad state of mind. He barely took care of himself or his house anymore. Only the dogs received their usual attention from him.

When Alana came to visit him, Will close the door into her face without even greeting her. He waited until she was gone, leaving it to herself to figure out that he never wanted to see her again.

Jack Crawford didn’t stop trying to contact him, so he turned off his phone for good, destroying the sim card.

Hannibal's uncle had managed to find out his bank account and had sent him an exuberant amount of money for taking good care of Hannibal. It was, again, a kind gesture as much as it irritated and angered Will. At first he had thought about sending it straight back, but then he had thought better of it.

Will bought a nice little house himself in Cornwall, England, right by the sea.

He sold the little house in the US, taking only his dogs and his most important things, not even bothering to tell anybody where he was going. For all he cared, he could vanish from their radar forever. He was sure that Jack would be able to find out where he went, but he didn't care. He would be too far away for him to be of any use.

So it came to be that Will was living in England, still enough money on his account to probably live for many many years without lifting a finger, but he enjoyed some manual work nonetheless. He started a little business repairing boat motors, but otherwise keeping pretty much to himself.

He got better, missing Hannibal less and less, but never forgetting about him. And maybe, who knew, one day they would see each other again.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!